

McAlpine Reopening Locking Process

Background

The only existing lock chamber at the McAlpine Lock, mile 607 Ohio River will be closed to all traffic during a repair project August 9 – 22, 2004. A significant queue of waiting vessels and tows is expected to develop on each side of this facility. Due to the significant impact that this closure and the resultant delays will have on the inland towing industry, it is imperative that upon reopening of the chamber, waiting traffic is passed through McAlpine in a safe, timely, expeditious and efficient manner.

Scope

The Coast Guard, Army Corps of Engineers and Towing Industry have established a McAlpine Queue Management Committee. Among other things this committee is tasked with the operation of the McAlpine Command Center. This Command Center, staffed 24/7 by licensed pilothouse personnel and government agency representatives will coordinate traffic throughout the closure and reopening period.

McAlpine Command Center

Phone – (812) 288-1784

VHF channel 14

Email – mc Alpine.command@acbl.net

Fax – (812) 288-1745

General Guidelines

1. Following the closure of the chamber, all traffic arriving to wait turn will be required to contact the McAlpine Command Center. A Regulated Navigation Area (RNA) will exist from Markland to Cannelton locks. The McAlpine Command Center will control movement of traffic in the RNA under the authority of the Coast Guard.
2. Once a definite date and time for reopening is established, the Command Center will begin advising tows to position or stage for lockage.
3. During the closure period the Queue List will be broadcast on VHF channel 14 daily at 0900 and again at 1500 Eastern Time.
4. Tows in queue are required to monitor VHF channel 13/16 and cell phone at all times. Failure to answer a call from the Command Center could result in loss of position in queue.

5. Tows in queue must have sufficient crew as to make the lock or make emergency response (minimum one licensed pilot within the scope of the 12 hour rule, and two deckhands). The towboat must be of sufficient horsepower to maneuver and lock the tow it is in charge of.
6. If possible, in order to keep traffic flowing, do not enter the chamber in questionable weather if unable to shove out.
7. In order to expedite the locking process, recreational vessels may at times be locked with commercial tows, provided that agreements and safeguards as set forth in the “Blue Book” are met. Otherwise, gathered recreational vessels will be locked at the end of each queue.

Specific Guidelines

- **Staging Areas**

The following staging areas are restricted to vessels positioning for lockage. No tow waiting turn should hold in these staging areas unless directed to proceed there by the Command Center.

Upstream – The primary staging area for downbound tows is from Ohio River mile 602.5 down to McAlpine lock at mile 607. The extended staging area will include Six Mile Island.

Downstream – The primary staging area for upbound tows will extend from mile 610.5 up to McAlpine lock at mile 607.

(See attachment for details of Staging Areas)

- **Engines**

Main engines must be warmed up and running 6 hours prior to anticipated time of lockage. Any vessel not ready to move when called by the Command Center could lose turn in queue.

- **Advancement of Queue**

The Command Center will coordinate and monitor the progress as the queue advances. Vessels waiting should make an orderly and timely advance in position as the queue moves. As a group locks, the next group in that direction should begin positioning. Except when changing the direction of lockage, as one tow shoves into the chamber the next in line is expected to immediately follow onto the wall.

- **Priority**

Decisions on priority lockage will be made in advance by a committee of executive level industry representatives. (See enclosed **RIETF** letter)

- **Tow Building in Queue**

Additions to or drops from tow while in queue will be permissible on a limited basis and by permission of the Command Center. No tow work will be performed within 24 hours of anticipated locking time.

- **Overage Tows**

No overage tows will be allowed during the operation of the Command Center.

- **Turning**

The accepted industry practice of “turning” tows will be allowed, subject to the approval of the Command Center and providing that no delay is incurred in the locking process.

- **Swapping Position in Queue**

With the permission of the Command Center, only “like” tows may swap position in queue. Larger tows of 9 or more barges may only swap with other larger tows. Smaller tows of less than 9 may swap position with other small tows. No swapping of positions will be allowed within 24 hours of anticipated locking time.

- **Combining of Small Tows**

To expedite the process whenever possible and with permission of the Command Center and the owning or operating company, smaller tows may be locked together.

While it is very important that traffic move in a timely and efficient manner, as always, safety is of paramount importance. Extreme caution is urged while approaching and transiting the McAlpine facility. Cooperation from all involved is very much appreciated.